

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SCA-01 DHA-02 PRS-01
PA-01 USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05
TRSE-00 L-03 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 VO-03 /081 W
-----096436 080334Z /75

R 061930Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2600
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 5566

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS UNHCR SREF BR
SUBJECT: REFUGEES IN LATIN AMERICA -- THE BRAZILIAN PICTURE

REF: A. STATE 151670 (NOTAL) B. BRASILIA 5226 (NOTAL)
C. BRASILIA 4955 (NOTAL) D. BRASILIA 4122 (NOTAL) E. BRASILIA 3483
NOTAL) F. STATE 130758 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. IN RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT'S INQUIRY ABOUT POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO ARGENTINE REFUGEES IN BRAZIL, POST BELIEVES THAT MAJOR OPTION AVAILABLE IS ESTABLISHMENT OF PAROLE PROGRAM TO ASSIST UNHCR INTERNATIONAL RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS. LEGAL PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF UNHCR CASELOAD IN BRAZIL APPEAR ADEQUATE AT PRESENT, ALTHOUGH AN UNAVOIDABLE GAP EXISTS WITH REGARD TO UNDECLARED REFUGEES BEYOND THE REACH OF UNHCR. PROPOSAL THAT UNHCR USE OAS TO EXTEND ITS REFUGEE PROGRAM CAUSES US SERIOUS DOUBTS IN
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VIEW OF LOCAL FACTORS MOTIVATING GOB TO SHUN PUBLICITY ABOUT THE HAVEN IT AFFORDS REFUGEES, AND BECAUSE OF POSSIBILITY THAT REFUGEE PROGRAM, AT LEAST IN BRAZIL, MIGHT BE PREJUDICED BY ENTANGLEMENT WITH THE DEBATE OVER HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OAS.
END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL A INQUIRED AS TO ADDITIONAL MEASURES WHICH MIGHT BE

TAKEN TO ASSIST ARGENTINE REFUGEES IN BRAZIL THROUGH LEGAL PROTECTION, CARE AND MAINTENANCE, AND RESETTLEMENT.

3. PRINCIPAL STEP US NOW COULD TAKE WOULD BE TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO LOCAL UNHCR REQUEST (REFS B -E) THAT USG PARTICIPATE WITH PAROLE PROGRAM IN DISCREET INTERNATIONAL RESETTLEMENT EFFORT ORGANIZED BY UNHCR. DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY HAS MANIFESTED SOME RELUCTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN RESETTLEMENT EFFORT BY MEANS OF BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH LOCAL UNHCR (REFTEL F); IN VIEW OF THIS, POST SUGGESTED AS ALTERNATIVE A QUIET APPROACH TO UNHCR HEAD-QUARTERS IN GENEVA (REFTEL C).

4. CLEARLY WHAT GOB DOES NOT WANT IS A PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN OR APPEAL. WITHIN THAT HOST COUNTRY CONSTRAINT, UNHCR HAS SOUGHT TO RESOLVE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN AS LOW-KEY A MANNERS AS POSSIBLE. UNHCR RECOGNIZE THAT GOB OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED THAT EXCESSIVE PUBLICITY WOULD (1) ATTRACT STILL MORE REFUGEES INTO COUNTRY; (2) RAISE POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITH ARGENTINA; (3) GENERATE HEADLINE PRESSURES WITHIN GOB ITSELF FOR A LESS THAN CORRECT HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. (ALTHOUGH GOB IS IN A DIFFERENT HUMAN RIGHTS CATEGORY FROM ARGENTINA, GOB IS AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME WHICH INCLUDES ELEMENTS SYMPATHETIC WITH ARGENTINE EFFORTS TO EXTIRPATE ALLEGED SUBVERSIVES.)

5. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE HARBOR SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT THE UTILITY, AT LEAST TO THE BRAZILIAN SITUATION, OF THE SUGGESTION
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CONTAINED PARAGRAPH 3 REF A, THAT UNHCR BRING OAS INTO PICTURE AND WORK THROUGH IT TO EXTEND ITS PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA. THIS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ENTAIL THE KIND OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY THAT THE GOB SHUNS, PARTICULARLY IN A FORUM WHICH INCLUDES THE VERY SOUTHERN CONE STATES WHICH ARE THE SOURCE OF INFLOWING REFUGEES AND OF GOB NERVOUSNESS ABOUT THE ISSUE. ADDITIONAL DANGER IS THAT LINKAGE OF UNHCR EFFORTS TO OAS AT THIS TIME COULD ENTANGLE REFUGEE QUESTION WITH THE ONGOING DEBATE IN THE OAS OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VS. TERRORISM/ NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY--A DEBATE IN WHICH BRAZIL HAS ADOPTED A QUIET BUT VIGOROUS LEADERSHIP ROLE WITHIN THE SOUTHERN CONE IN OPPOSITION TO THE US POSITION.

6. WE SEE NO FURTHER STEPS CALLED FOR AT THIS TIME WITH REGARD TO MAINTENANCE AND LEGAL PROTECTION OF THE UNHCR REFUGEE CASELOAD. GOB HAS ASSURED UN OFFICIALS THAT IT WILL NOT ENGAGE IN REFOULEMENT, A GUARANTEE MOST RECENTLY REITERATED DURING VISIT OF UNHCR DIRECTOR FOR PROTECTION JAEGER, AND SO FAR KEPT WITH REGARD TO DECLARED REFUGEES (REF A). GOB HAS NOT PROVIDED OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS TO REFUGEES TO COVER STAY BEYOND 6 MONTH LIMIT ON TOURIST VISAS--A FACT WHICH HAS LED TO TEMPORARY DETENTION OF REFUGEES IN A FEW INSTANCES. HOWEVER, UNHCR APPEARS TO HAVE WORKED OUT QUICK FIXES OR INFORMAL SOLUTIONS WITH GOB AND METROPOLITAN POLICE, WHICH HAVE

KEPT PROBLEM WITHIN BOUNDS. FINALLY, ACCORDING TO UNHCR (REF E), REFUGEES RECEIVE ADEQUATE MAINTENANCE, FIRST THROUGH CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND LATER THROUGH UNHCR ITSELF, ONCE APPLICATIONS FOR REFUGEE STATUS ARE APPROVED. UNHCR OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, HAVE REPEATEDLY MENTIONED THE HIGH COSTS ENTAILED IN SUCH CARE AND MAINTENANCE AND HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN ABOUT BUDGETARY COVERAGE SHOULD REFUGEE CASELOAD RISE VERY STEEPLY. SHOULD THIS EVENTUALLY DEVELOP INTO MAJOR PROBLEM, USG MIGHT CONSIDER FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO OPERATION CHanneled THROUGH UNHCR HEADQUARTERS IN GENEVA.

7. A MAJOR GAP EXISTS, OF COURSE, WITH REGARD TO UNDECLARED REFUGEES, WHO HAVE ENTERED BRAZIL ON TOURIST VISAS AND SOUTH TO MELT AWAY INTO THE CROWDS OF THE GIB CITIES AND, IN SOME CASES, CONFIDENTIAL

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TO BUILD A NEW LIFE HERE. BY ITS VERY NATURE, THIS GROUP IS BEYOND THE REACH OF REFUGEE CARE AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES. ITS MEMBERS ARE ALSO THE MOST PRONE TO EXPULSION IF DISCOVERED BY POLICE, SINCE THEY DO NOT ENJOY THE PROTECTIVE MANTLE OF THE UNHCR AND, IN MANY CASES, MAY NOT BE DISTINGUISHED BY BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES FROM THE MANY OTHER ARGENTINE AND URUGUAYAN ILLEGALS WHO HAVE MIGRATED TO BRAZIL IN SEARCH OF JOBS DURING RECENT YEARS. IN SOME CASES, CHIEFLY THOSE INVOLVING PERSONS SUSPECTED OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITY WHO HAVE BEEN PICKED UP AS ILLEGAL ALIENS BY POLICE OR MILITARY AUTHORITIES IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL, UNDECLARED REFUGEES HAVE NOT MERELY BEEN DEPORTED AS COMMON ILLEGALS, BUT HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES. THE RESULT, IN PRACTICAL IF NOT IN STRICTLY LEGAL TERMS, WAS REFOULEMENT. IN RECENT MEETING WITH FONMIN OFFICIALS, UNHCR DIRECTOR FOR PROTECTION JAEGER RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT GOB WOULD CHANNEL TO UNHCR REFUGEE CASES COMING TO ITS ATTENTION IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW STRICTLY GOB ADHERES TO THIS COMMITMENT OR HOW CLOSELY FON MIN ITSELF CAN CONTROL THE SITUATION, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL, GIVEN THE ANONYMITY AND UNREGISTERED STATUS OF UNDECLAREDS, THAT THE GOB COULD VERY EFFECTIVELY BE MONITORED AND CALLED TO ACCOUNT ON THAT COMMITMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, PAROLE, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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